

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 23, 2014

His Excellency Ban Ki-Moon  
Secretary-General  
The United Nations  
760 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

We write to convey our strong objections to your comments on July 20 describing Israel's military operations in Gaza as an "atrocious action." We share your deep concern regarding civilian casualties on both sides, but your comments failed to recognize an important fact: in this conflict, one side is trying to protect civilians while the other is deliberately trying to kill them. Israel is undertaking extraordinary efforts to avoid civilian casualties while Hamas cynically uses other Palestinians as human shields and attempts to deliberately kill Israeli civilians.

When leaders and organizations of the United Nations blur the clear distinction between a nation-state defending itself and a terrorist organization attempting to murder civilians—and suggest the two are morally equivalent—it results in three dangerous outcomes. First, it does a great disservice to the credibility of the U.N. Second, it lends a degree of perceived legitimacy that terrorist organizations do not deserve. Third, and most problematically, it undercuts the legitimate right of nation-states to defend their citizens.

Israel is under attack, and Israel, like any other state, has a right to defend itself. No nation can accept two thousand rockets being launched at its cities and towns. As you know, Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations recognizes a nation's right to self-defense.

While we share your desire to see an end to hostilities as soon as possible, your statement was not helpful. We respectfully request that your future comments recognize the fact that the "atrocious action" is the deliberate terrorist attack on civilians—not the measured response of a nation-state trying to defend its citizens.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,



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Kelly A. Ayotte  
United States Senate



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Ben Cardin  
United States Senate